

**From:** Dan Levesque [dan@ainop.com]

**Sent:** Friday, September 29, 2006 3:16 PM

**To:** ME, Connect

**Cc:** Spelke, Amy; Yancey-Wrona, Janet; Gartley, Marcia; Morin, Peter (Snowe); Adams, Kurt; Jeremy Fischer; Cashman, Jack; Eric Warren; Don Theriault

**Subject:** Aroostook Internet Wireless Broadband Service

Dear Sirs,

My name is Dan Levesque and I am the owner of Netherland Office Products and Aroostook Internet. Myself and my staff have been closely following the ConnectMe Authority and any actions or initiatives being proposed by the board. Here at Aroostook Internet, we feel that we have valuable experience in serving broadband internet to rural, and even remote, regions of Maine. This email is to basically introduce ourselves and give you a background on what we are doing and what we have already accomplished.

Since 1999, we have been serving rural customers and communities with wireless broadband internet service. In terms of speed, the service itself compares favorably to DSL service that much of Maine already enjoys, or at least the portion of Maine that is within 3 miles of a Telco central office. Outside of the reach of DSL, there are some folks that are able to get cable internet access from providers such as Time Warner and (what used to be) Adelphia. While these are both fantastic services, we feel that the infrastructure necessary to serve a small community is cost prohibitive, maybe even cost prohibitive to giants like Verizon and Time Warner. That is where we come in. For a much smaller initial investment, we can provide high speed internet access to small communities through the unlicensed frequencies that the FCC has opened up for the private sector to work with. Some of our connections reach 15-20 miles from what we would consider to be a major town.

With the years of experience that we have in this field, coupled with the present infrastructure that we have in place, we are finding that we are able to reach out further and further from our home base here in Presque Isle. We have wireless internet customers as far south as Hodgdon and as far north as St David (Long Lake, near Madawaska). We are presently working with the good folks at Brookline Power to serve customers in the Millinocket and East Millinocket areas, and we have no plans to stop there. Our goal is to serve wireless broadband to the rural areas of Maine, ranging from Madawaska to Bangor.

We are willing to share our experiences with board, and would love to be a part of the process going forward. The taxpayers of Maine deserve to see what all of the options are, and what these options are going to cost. We feel that the small, local providers are the answer as many of them are already doing what the ConnectMe authority is looking to do. Technology changes at a rapid pace, and the price keeps coming down. We are taking advantage of the best technology available, at a reasonable price for both ourselves and our clients. Our infrastructure allows for easy changes to new technologies on a going forward basis.

I have invested 3 million dollars between Netherland Office Products and Aroostook Internet, and then another \$200,000 to upgrade our existing sites, as well as the 16 new wireless access points that we have installed. It would be a mistake on my part to give you the impression that this is nothing more than a serious venture, and a major mistake for you folks to think that we are anything short of a serious player. We have a staff of 30 employees, which reflects an increase of 6 new staff members since January 3rd of this year. We also have a fleet of 17 vehicles that are on the road all day long between sales, service and wireless internet installations. We have installed 220+ new wireless internet customers since the beginning of the year, and the rate of weekly installations has increased on a weekly basis.

One of our major concerns would be that this board inadvertently hurts our growth due to lack of education on what we are trying to accomplish and the technology we are using to accomplish it. Another grave concern is that the board tries to pursue new taxation efforts that would stagnate our growth, and also stagnate the growth of the statewide broadband customer base. Lastly, we are concerned that we would not be considered for any grants or funding that may help us move into even more remote regions than we are presently planning. Since we presently do not have any representation on this board, we worry that we are not in the spotlight enough for the state to consider us for any future grant money. In our business, we feel that we can do much much more with any grant money available than the companies that rely on present WIRED infrastructure.

Thank you for taking the time to hear my story. I embrace the opportunity to explain anything in more detail if you have any unanswered questions. If you have any technical questions that you wish to have answered via email, please feel free to email my technicians directly.

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